A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

THE TALLEST LIGHTNING TALE

The late Camille Flammarion was a paradox. He was an able astronomer and meteorologist, but he constantly let his imagination run away with him, and he had, for a man of science, an unparalleled capacity for swallowing preposterous stories. Here is one you will find in his popular treatise on lightning:

Two trees, an oak and a pine, grew about ten feet apart in the forest of Pont-de-Bussière, Haute-Vienne. In the year 1868 they were hit at the same instant by a stroke of lightning. "In the twinkling of an eye," we are told, "their leaves were interchanged. The pine needles found themselves on the oak and the leaves of the oak went to brighten the austerity of the pine with their delicate verdure. This metamorphosis was something quite out of the ordinary; hence all the people in the neighborhood crowded to the scene of this miracle to contemplate the extraordinary spectacle of a pine-oak and an oak-pine. Most unexpectedly, the two trees seemed to accommodate themselves very well to their new condition. The pine remained agreeably adorned with its summery foliage, while the oak got along perfectly with the somber needles of the pine."

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